

**HANOVER COUNTY  
BOARD OF SOCIAL SERVICES  
MINUTES  
January 28, 2014**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Ms. Hutto, Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:34 p.m.

The following members were present: Robert Barnette, Sheila Crossen-Powell, Sue Dibble, David Hobbs, Larry Huber, Lynn H. Saunders (3:38 p.m.), and G. E. "Ed" Via. Also in attendance: Jim Taylor, Deputy County Administrator; Tamara Temoney, Assistant Director; Dennis Walter, Senior Assistant County Attorney; Jacque Althizer, Budget Management Analyst Senior; Ginny Ferguson, Quality Assurance Coordinator; Daricka Jackson, Benefit Programs Manager and Robin Riley, Administrative Assistant.

**II. CITIZENS' COMMENT PERIOD**

There were no comments.

**III. INTRODUCTION OF NEW STAFF**

Ms. Jackson said a new Human Services Assistant (CSA), Ms. Nadia Morgan (unable to attend today), was hired January 1, 2014. Ms. Morgan is from Richmond City DSS and will be stationed at the Bell Creek office. Ms. Hutto extended a welcome to Ms. Morgan.

**IV. APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER 26, 2013 BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

Mr. Barnette moved to approve the November 26, 2013 Board Meeting Minutes. Mr. Hobbs seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

**V. FEBRUARY IS ELIGIBILITY APPRECIATION MONTH**

Dr. Crossen-Powell asked the Board to approve a letter signed by Ms. Hutto in recognition of the Benefit Programs (BPS) staff. Ms. Hutto read the letter which thanks workers for their service. The letter will be sent via email to all BPS workers.

Ms. Dibble moved to approve the letter recognizing BPS workers and February as Eligibility Appreciation Month. Mr. Barnette seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

**VI. COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES STRATEGIC PLAN – MR. TAYLOR**

*(electronic copy of presentation sent to Board members 2-3-14)*

Mr. Taylor said that Dr. Crossen-Powell has been involved with working on the strategic plan for the last six months. The overall County plan was adopted by the Board of Supervisors in 2012 with the Human Services component (goal) being to:

*Promote citizen independence and a high quality of life.*

The current Human Services plan was adopted in 2007 and should be updated about every five years.

Mr. Taylor gave a slide presentation and discussed the following:

- Overall Strategies
- Overall Objectives
- 2011 Citizen Survey

The County is doing well when compared with other localities in the region. The measures currently in place map the County's overall objectives to performance criteria. Mr. Taylor reviewed and discussed the objectives:

- Ensure that children are school ready
- Ensure that adults are work ready
- Ensure housing at various price levels is available to meet the needs of the population
- Improve the health status of the community
- Increase the self-sufficiency of vulnerable residents (this is where Social Services comes in)

The citizen survey is conducted every three years, and Hanover was among the top 1% in the country for eight (out of 108) questions. Hanover was number one in the country for six of those eight questions, which included mental health services, drug and substance abuse services and adult protective services. Hanover also ranked in the upper 1% for employee courtesy and overall employee impression.

Ms. Hutto asked if there was a number available of how many surveys were completed. Mr. Taylor said not many were submitted, but the survey is statistically sound. It was mentioned a Board of Supervisors meeting, about whether the survey was valid.

The County has started putting together some specific strategies for the Human Services updates. In terms of pre-school, the County would like to increase the number of Star Quality providers as there are only a handful in Hanover.

To ensure adults are work ready, students need to graduate with the skills they need. There may be an opportunity through the Trade Center for adults to take courses at night.

In terms of housing, the strategy is to assess the housing market, identify gaps, and decrease the number of people living in substandard housing. The measure is to determine whether owners and renters are paying 30% or more of income on housing. Dr. Crossen-Powell said that a survey of homelessness is being completed this week and the Point in Time count will be done Thursday, January 30. The schools and HUD have different definitions of homelessness. Ms. Hutto asked if there is information to show price ranges of affordable housing that is available. Mr. Taylor said the County needs to work with the real estate community to determine this. Ms. Ferguson commented that Habitat for Humanity is a resource. Dr. Crossen-Powell said that the average rent for an apartment in Hanover is at least \$900/month, which, if one has low-income wages, is definitely more than 30% of income. To ensure housing needs of the disabled and elderly, the County's strategy is to develop a coordinated planning process to meet the needs of a changing population.

Objectives to increase self-sufficiency of vulnerable residents include protecting children and the elderly, meeting the basic needs of the population, assisting special needs population with transportation, and providing a safety net. Transportation is a key component of the plan as Hanover is a diverse locality with both suburban and rural areas. The plan for this issue is to develop a comprehensive strategy to enhance available and affordable transportation.

Since there are different interpretations of terms, one of the keys to this plan will be in defining the terms of self-sufficiency, at-risk, special needs and vulnerable.

Mr. Taylor asked the Board members for their input on strengths, weaknesses and opportunities. Other suggestions can also be sent by email to Mr. Taylor.

The following was discussed:

Strengths

Ms. Saunders: collaboration; faith-based and civic organizations

Dr. Crossen-Powell: collaboration

Mr Hobbs: stability within leadership and County departments as a whole

Mr. Barnette: strong sense of volunteerism

Mr. Huber: school trade center which could be utilized for the community as a whole

Mr. Huber said the education system is tailored and pushes too much toward students attending college/universities. This is not just in Hanover County but in all education systems. Some students would rather learn a trade and start an apprenticeship or internship. Ms. Saunders said that there is sometimes a stigma attached to attending trade school instead of college.

Weaknesses or Opportunities

Ms. Hutto: affordable housing

Mr. Barnette: a definition of what is affordable is needed; jobs – there are no large employers in the County and not many technical jobs

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Mr. Via: affordable housing has been discussed for quite a long time and the County needs to move forward

Ms. Saunders: transportation

What are we Missing?

Mr. Hobbs: does Human Services do enough to promote what it does so that the large percentage of the County that has really no touch to Human Services develops a value related to Human Services?; more visibility is needed to raise the level of value that people see for the whole department

Dr. Crossen-Powell: the definition of Human Services has been expanded to include libraries, parks and recreation, the health department, not just DSS and CSB

Mr. Barnette: the community needs to be aware of programs, i.e., fuel assistance; better communication to the community.

**VII. FY 2013 END-OF-YEAR REPORT**

*(electronic copy of presentation sent to Board members 2-3-14)*

Dr. Crossen-Powell presented a slide show and discussed the following:

Benefit Programs – State Performance Indicators Monthly Report

Hanover County's data was compared with other localities: Richmond City, Henrico, Chesterfield/Colonial Heights, Spotsylvania, Stafford and Albemarle.

#SNAP (Food Assistance) Recipients

From State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2007 to 2013, there was an increase of 234% (2728 to 9117) in individuals receiving food assistance benefits. From SFY 2012 to 2013, there was an increase of only 2%.

Energy Assistance: Heating and Cooling

If an individual received heating assistance during the year, they will automatically be sent an application the following year. Both heating and cooling programs serve the elderly, disabled and children under six years old. The federal government decreased the dollar amount available this year to \$100.

Child Care and Early Childhood Development

From July, 2012 to June, 2013, State funding provided child care for 208 children in 67 families. The majority of the child care providers are located in Hanover County.

Service Programs – State Critical Outcomes Report

Hanover County's data was compared to the localities listed under Benefit Programs Report. Other departments are being contacted to discuss their strategies. The statistics are compared with State averages rather than actual totals.

Child Protective Services (CPS)

In FY 2011 and FY 2012, 39% of the child abuse and neglect complaints taken were valid. In FY 2013, 36% of the 562 complaints taken were valid. Complaints must meet State criteria and the alleged abuser must be in a caretaker role.

Adult Services (AS); Adult Protective Services (APS)

From FY 2012 to FY 2013, the overall number of Adult Services recipients (UAI screenings, assisted living facility assessments/reassessments, companion care) decreased by 30%. Adult guardianship cases increased 150%.

Foster Care Children

DSS has no control over these figures. There were six children taken into care all of last year, and just this week, DSS had four children come in.

Customer Volume

Customer volume (switchboard and lobby traffic) is down as DSS is now able to conduct interviews by phone. Clients are being educated to contact their worker directly rather than coming in to the agency or calling the switchboard. Over one-third of new benefit program applications are now submitted electronically.

Looking Ahead

Dr. Crossen-Powell discussed:

- CommonHelp and VACMS
- Eligibility Modernization
  - Medicaid: Local agencies will now have to send out a six-page renewal form and staff will have to enter pertinent information because customers are not filling out all fields on line
- Sequestration: possible cuts to the SSBG (Social Services Block Grant) for CPS and APS and LIHEAP (fuel and cooling programs)
- State Cuts to Localities: there are several bills before the General Assembly adding funds to at least the State Department of Social Services.  
Mr. Barnette asked if there would be any cuts to the SNAP program and Dr. Crossen-Powell said not at this time.
- Sustainability: HDSS is about to get 500 additional cases through FAMIS. If Medicaid is expanded, there could potentially be about 7,000 additional Medicaid cases added.

**VIII. FY 2015 BUDGET UPDATE SUMMARY AND ACTION: RECOMMENDATION THAT THE BOARD CONCURS/SUPPORTS THE BUDGET PROPOSED BY THE DIRECTOR AS BEING APPROPRIATE/ADEQUATE TO PROVIDE PUBLIC ASSISTANCE AND SOCIAL SERVICES IN HANOVER COUNTY**

Ms. Althizer distributed copies of the most recent budget and reviewed changes. A 2% increase in employee salaries has been added. One Benefit Programs Specialist (BPS) position has also been added. Two positions were initially requested, one BPS and one CSA and DSS was given the option of choosing one of the positions which was a BPS. Expenses are up about 3% and general fund about 2%. Mr. Barnette asked about contractual services. Ms. Althizer said that line was for a special contract with a vendor and has been taken out because it is not being used. Dr. Crossen-Powell said the agency is working with County IT for Laserfiche licenses. Mr. Taylor said that things appear to be looking up now.

Ms. Hutto moved to approve the recommendation that the Board concurs/supports the budget proposed by the Director as being appropriate/adequate to provide public assistance and social services in Hanover County. Mr. Barnette seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

## **IX. BUDGET UPDATE**

Ms. Althizer reviewed the current year-to-date data. DSS will probably not spend all in the budget between now and the end of the fiscal year. Mr. Taylor asked if the amount was consistent with prior years and Ms. Althizer said it was at this point in time.

Ms. Hutto thanked Ms. Althizer for the information.

## **X. HANOVER DSS SCORECARD**

*(electronic copy of updated Dashboard sent to Board Members 1-24-14)*

Ms. Ferguson reviewed data for November and December 2013. The number of customers previously unknown to DSS was 61 for December, 2013. The Benefit Program Ongoing Count of 6,522 is less than the October and November figures. Medicare Part B has a one-year coverage from January 1-December 31, and applicants must reapply on January 1 each year. As a result, there is a significant decrease in caseload ongoing count. The TANF federal work participation rate is up to 52.5% and the State standard is 50%.

Dr. Temoney said that DSS is working on improving critical outcomes in foster care. Regular meetings are held with supervisors to review cases.

Ms. Hutto thanked Ms. Ferguson and Dr. Temoney for the information.

## **XI. DIRECTOR'S UPDATE**

The agency was very busy in December and January even though there were holidays during those months. There was a major issue with the computers at the Bell Creek office which use a VPN connection. Ms. Althizer and Ms. Adams intervened with the State to allow access using "tokens".

Ms. Hodgson, CSA Coordinator, served on a hiring panel for the State Office of Comprehensive Services.

HCEF donated \$10,250 in holiday funds designated for elderly citizens in the County. Checks for \$125 each were sent to 82 individuals aged 75 and above.

Dr. Temoney attended the Central Regional Directors meeting.

Agency staff worked with Head Start to provide parents of potential students information about enrollment in that program.

Two meetings were staffed on Habitat for Humanity.

Ms. Althizer attended a VGFOA (Virginia Government Finance Officers' Association) training.

The Customer Service Agent position has been filled. Ms. Nadia Morgan will be introduced at the next Board meeting.

One of the Benefit Programs Specialists has resigned. Interviews have been completed and an offer should be made sometime this week.

Family Services Specialist (Foster Care) interviews were held and there are four viable candidates for the position.

The Agency holiday party was held in December at the Ashland YMCA.

Capital One sponsored a skating party at the Ashland Skateland for families, including natural and foster parents and children.

The Agency received custody of a 16-year old pregnant young woman and four other children: three teenagers (two with substance abuse issues and one with mental health issues) and one 16-month old child. Ms. Dibble asked what happens when the teen delivers the child. Dr. Crossen-Powell said DSS does not have custody of the child unless the young woman decides to place the child for adoption or there is abuse/neglect.

An adoption appeal was held with the Virginia Department of Social Services but DSS has not yet heard about the outcome, although it has been over 40 days.

DSS received a copy of the report to the State Executive Council on the "Guidelines for Determining Levels of Care for Foster Care Services for Licensed Child Placement Agencies". This is a work group with DSS staff, members of the Virginia Municipal League and numerous private providers. The group is looking at standards for therapeutic foster homes where there will be four levels of care. For example: regular level - if a sibling sub-group is placed in one of the homes, and one child has no special needs, that child can stay with their siblings; or assessment level which provides up to sixty days of assessment so the child can stay in the community rather than being sent to a residential placement. These guidelines are now published for comment. Mr. Walter said the guidelines are published in the Virginia Register which can be accessed on line through the General Assembly web site. The issuing agency should have a link on the page. Dr. Crossen-Powell said it is the Office of Comprehensive Services.

Regarding the newborn child who was left at the hospital, parental rights have been terminated and DSS is moving toward adoption.

Two supervisors attended "Supervising for Results" training held by the State.

The EITC income tax preparation program begins next Tuesday, February 4, at 5 p.m. Volunteers are still needed. Mr. Barnette asked about the requirements for a person to receive tax filing assistance. Ms. Ferguson said that income must be less than \$58,000/year; if married, both people must be present; they must bring ID, Social Security cards for adults and children and all relevant documentation. DSS also has a telephone extension dedicated for this information (804-365-6646). Assistance is provided on a first-come, first-serve basis and people can register one hour ahead of time. Assistance can be provided to residents of other localities. Henrico County is no longer providing this service. Mr. Barnette asked if special training is required for volunteers. Dr. Crossen-Powell said that volunteers must complete on-line training for basic and intermediate tax preparation. Auditors are sent to ensure that everyone has met the criteria. Mr. Taylor asked how many returns were prepared last year and what was the total amount. Dr. Crossen-Powell will provide this information.

Seven people were indicted by the grand jury for welfare fraud and six have been arrested.

The Ashland Police Department conducted training on gangs, drugs and hate groups for the child welfare staff. This training will be held for all DSS employees. There are gang members now residing in Ashland, although there is no evidence of gang activity.

The Point in Time count will be conducted this week.

## **XII. ADJOURNMENT**

The Board meeting was adjourned at 5:10 p.m. by Ms. Hutto.

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Victoria Hutto, Chair

*Next Meeting: Tuesday, March 25, 2014, 3:30 p.m.*